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Syracuse University Contemporary Ensemble: Dr. Alina Plourde, Director

Syracuse University Contemporary Ensemble, Setnor School of Music

Alina Plourde
Syracuse University

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Syracuse University Contemporary Music Ensemble

Dr. Alina Plourde, Director

**An Interactive Virtual Showcase Experience
Setnor School of Music Facebook Livestream
November 19, 2020
2 PM**

We acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation,
firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous people
on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands.

We invite and encourage audience members to contribute their reactions, questions, and improvisation suggestions via the comment section on the Facebook livestream.



Setnor School of Music



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Syracuse University
College of Visual and Performing Arts

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Syracuse University Contemporary Music Ensemble

Dr. Alina Plourde, Director

Andrew Barnett	Composition	Senior
Lindsey Bartlett	Voice Performance & Pedagogy	Graduate
Hyunjung Byun	Composition	Graduate
Sarah Goldman	Television, Radio, Film	Sophomore
Jon Harrity	Clarinet Performance & Conducting	Graduate
Samuel Lovas	Composition	Graduate
Paul Mokotoff	Aerospace Engineering	Senior
Claire Nolan	Voice Performance	Senior
Victoria Quiñones	Music History and Cultures	Junior
Connor Ritchie	Composition	Sophomore
Tara Sandlin	Voice Performance	Sophomore

The Syracuse University Contemporary Ensemble would like to recognize the following individuals for extending considerable time and efforts toward the realization of this course and event: Lindsey Bartlett, for program notes and organization; Andrew Barnett and Hyunjung Byun, for technical help; Alex Guiliano and Claire Nolan, for social media materials and promotions; Jon Harrity, for rehearsal assistance and technical help; Samuel Lovas, for sound engineering and video compilation; Tara Sandlin, for event management and program creation; Hannah Hein, Michelle Taylor, and Bryan Watson for logistical and technological assistance; and our fabulous director Alina Plourde for helping us explore the world of new music and guiding us through the semester. Thank you!

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Group Improvisation with Collaborative Zoom Artwork

Syracuse University Contemporary Music Ensemble

I Never Saw Another Butterfly

Lori Laitman

III. Birdsong

(b. 1955)

Jon Harrity, clarinet; Tara Sandlin, soprano

Spunky Monkey

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

Jon Harrity, clarinet and synthesizer; Paul Mokotoff, viola

Animal Charade Improvisation

Jon Harrity & Tara Sandlin, movement

Cuatro Canciones Andinas

Gabriela Lena Frank

IV. Yunca

(b. 1972)

Sarah Goldman, mezzo-soprano; Connor Ritchie, piano

With Thee, in the Desert

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

*Lindsey Bartlett, body percussion, air, and synthesizer;
Paul Mokotoff, viola; Tara Sandlin, voice*

Landscape Improvisation

Hyunjung Byun

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Jungfrau

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

*Lindsey Bartlett, voice; Hyunjung Byun, piano and Andromeda waves;
Samuel Lovas, guitar; Tim Simmons, drone*

Antigonish

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

*Lindsey Bartlett, spoken word; Hyunjung Byun, ghost piano;
Samuel Lovas, guitar; Connor Ritchie, piano; Tim Simmons, drone*

Collaborative Poetry Improvisation

Members of the Contemporary Music Ensemble

Wandering Underwater

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

*Hyunjung Byun, electronic organ and bells;
Jon Harrity, Clarinet; Tara Sandlin, voice*

I will give my love an apple

arr. Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Lindsey Bartlett, mezzo-soprano; Samuel Lovas, guitar

White Noise

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

*Lindsey Bartlett, windchimes; Hyunjung Byun, environmental sounds;
Jon Harrity, clarinet*

Three Heavens and Hells

Meredith Monk
(b. 1942)

I. "There are three heavens and hells"

II. "People, animal, things heaven and hell"

*Lindsey Bartlett, Claire Nolan,
Victoria Quiñones, and Tara Sandlin, treble voices*

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Graphic Score Improvisation

Samuel Lovas, graphic score; Tara Sandlin

Out of My Element

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

Sarah Goldman, voice and poetry; Samuel Lovas, guitar

Toft Serenade

Augusta Read Thomas
(b. 1964)

Andrew Barnett, piano; Paul Mokotoff, viola

Echolocation

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

*Lindsey Bartlett, vocal sounds; Hyunjung Byun, electric piano;
Samuel Lovas, guitar; Paul Mokotoff, viola*

As of Now

Collaboratively Composed by Performers

*Hyunjung Byun, piano; Samuel Lovas, guitar;
Paul Mokotoff, viola; Victoria Quiñones, voice and poetry*

Group Improvisation with Bus Sound Symphony, c. 2020

*Syracuse University Contemporary Music Ensemble,
with environmental sounds sourced by Tara Sandlin*

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Program Notes

This semester, the Syracuse University Contemporary Ensemble engaged with music in three main avenues: live group improvisation, previously composed pieces, and collaborative recording of new works. Our collaborative recording process provided a consistent way to play and sing together despite our volatile public health situation and its impact on rehearsals. Group members recorded tracks into an online collaborative platform. These tracks were then shared with the class, and others added to them as they were led. This recording process—slightly atypical for classical music composition as nothing was written down at any point—resulted in several finished pieces that you will hear today and many other enjoyable experimental projects.

Group Improvisation with Collaborative Zoom Artwork

All Performers

Watch as members of the Contemporary Music Ensemble improvise music based upon abstract drawings created in real time over Zoom.

I Never Saw Another Butterfly

Lori Laitman (b. 1955)

III. Birdsong (Anonymous, 1941)

Lori Laitman is an American composer who has composed multiple operas and choral works and over 300 songs.¹ *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* is a collection of poems by young people who were killed in the Holocaust. In this song cycle, Laitman creates a story arc of hope and despair. In “Birdsong”—a poem of unknown authorship that was nonetheless preserved from a manuscript—we hear the story of the speaker’s ability to rise above horrid living conditions to focus on the loveliness of life.

Text

Birdsong

He doesn’t know the world at all
Who stays in his nest and doesn’t go out.
He doesn’t know what birds know best
Nor what I want to sing about,
That the world is full of loveliness.

When dewdrops sparkle in the grass
And earth’s aflood with morning light,
A blackbird sings upon a bush

To greet the dawning after night.
Then I know how fine it is to live.

Hey; try to open up your heart
To beauty; go to the woods someday
And weave a wreath of memory there.
Then if the tears obscure your way
You’ll know how wonderful it is
To be alive.

¹ “Lori Laitman Website”. <http://www.artsongs.com>. Accessed on November 15, 2020.

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Spunky Monkey

Jon Harrity and Paul Mokotoff

As a baby chimpanzee, the world is so new and open for exploration. Spending their days swinging from tress, playing with others, and looking for food. Curiosity takes them through the trees and around the jungle. What will they find?

Animal Charade Improvisation

Jon Harrity and Tara Sandlin (movement)

This improvisation will be influenced by the audience's suggestions. Commentors on the livestream may suggest animals to inspire Tara's movement, which will in turn influence Jon's playing.

Cuatro Canciones Andinas

Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972)

IV. Yunca

Gabriela Lena Frank is an American pianist and composer of contemporary classical music who explores identity and her multicultural heritage—her mother is Peruvian and Chinese and her father is of Jewish and Lithuanian decent—in her compositions. Frank says that the songs in *Cuatro Canciones Andinas* reflect the inspiration of José María Arguedas, a Peruvian folklorist, poet, and Quechua advocate. The text draws on indigenous poetry collected and translated by Arguedas from Quechua into Spanish. “Yunca” addresses a final departure. Yunca (also spelled yunka) are traditional funeral songs of the indigenous people of the Cuzco region of southern Peru, one of the areas where Arguedas collected songs and folktales.²

Text

¿Adónde vas, padre mío?
Voy a la gran selva, voy caminando.
¿A qué vas, quién te lleva?
Cosecharé la dulce coca, voy solo.
¡Vuelve pronto, vuelve pronto!

Where are you going, my father?
I am going to the great forest, I am going walking.
To what place do you go, who calls you?
I will reap the sweet coca, I am going alone.
Come back soon!

En la montaña por donde pasas
una bandera negra flamea.
¡Qué corazón, que corazón amargo!

In the mountain by the way you pass
a black flag is fluttering.
What a bitter heart, what a bitter heart!

Campanita de Paucartambo
tócame,
Yo voy a la gran selva,
no volveré jamás.

Little bell of Paucartambo,
toll for me,
I am going to the great forest,
I will never return.

² Creative Academy of Music. “About Gabriella Frank”. <https://www.glfcam.com/people/gabriela>. Accessed on November 15, 2020.

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With Thee, in the Desert

Lindsey Bartlett, Paul Mokotoff, and Tara Sandlin

"With Thee, in the Desert" is an 1861 poem by the American poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886).

"The poet takes us here to the exotic lands of North Africa where leopards roam and take shade under a Tamarind tree. The land is parched and the narrator and her companion have journeyed through the desert and are thirsty. But in addition to offering shade, the tamarind tree also bears fruit from which a refreshing citrus-like juice can be made. The leopard seems to represent love that has found a way to bloom after enduring hard and stifling times. It is still in the desert, but at least for the moment there is a bit of breathing space."³

Text

With thee, in the Desert —
With thee in the thirst —
With thee in the Tamarind wood —
Leopard breathes — at last!

Landscape Improvisation

Hyunjung Byun

This improvisation will be influenced by the audience's suggestions. Commentors on the livestream may suggest landscapes or natural images to inspire Hyunjung's improvisation.

Jungfrau

Lindsey Bartlett, Hyunjung Byun, Samuel Lovas, and Tim Simmons (drone)

The wind blows over the snowy mountain. It is unpredictable and wild—freezing. You feel the numbing across every part of your body, but you must trek on. You hear a humming in the distance and you go toward it. What awaits you beyond the snow?

Antigonish

Lindsey Bartlett, Hyun Byunjung, Samuel Lovas, Connor Ritchie, and Tim Simmons (drone)

"Antigonish" is an 1899 poem by the American educator and poet, William Hughes Mearns (1875-1965). It is also known as "The Little Man Who Wasn't There." The poem was inspired by reports of a ghost of a man roaming the stairs of a haunted house in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada.⁴

³ Kornfeld, Susan. "With Thee, in the Desert." *The Prowling Bee*, 3 Mar. 2012, 7:59PM, bloggingdickinson.blogspot.com/2012/03/with-thee-in-desert.html.

⁴ Colombo, John Robert (2000). *Ghost Stories of Canada*, p.47. Dundurn.

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Text

"Yesterday, upon the stair,
I met a man who wasn't there!
He wasn't there again today,
Oh how I wish he'd go away!"

When I came home last night at three,
The man was waiting there for me
But when I looked around the hall,
I couldn't see him there at all!

Go away, go away, don't you come back any
more!
Go away, go away, and please don't slam the
door...

Last night I saw upon the stair,
A little man who wasn't there,
He wasn't there again today
Oh, how I wish he'd go away...

Collaborative Poetry Improvisation

Selected Performers

In this improvisation, a few members of our ensemble will engage in a musical conversation while others will listen and try to interpret what they are saying by typing words and short phrases into the chat function on Zoom. The performers may choose whether to look at the chat (and let it influence their musical dialogue) or not. The Facebook live audience is also welcome to type words or phrases into the comment stream. At the end, we will read the responsive text as a sort of poem that is intertwined with the improvised music.

Wandering Underwater

Hyunjung Byun, Jon Harrity, and Tara Sandlin

When you dive under the water you open your eyes to see a blue abyss. The light dances with the seaweed in this underwater world. The waves gently push you back and forth while you watch little bubbles circle you. A fish swims by in the distance and you pause to stare before coming up for air. The smell of the air is salty and sweet.

I. I will give my love an apple

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

From Folksong Arrangements, Volume 6

Benjamin Britten was an English composer, conductor, and pianist. He was a central figure of 20th-century British music, with a range of works including opera, other vocal music, orchestral and chamber pieces.⁵ For his second folksong arrangement with guitar, Britten took a traditional tune noted by H.E.D. Hammond in Dorset in 1906. It was originally published as part of Hammond's collection for Boosey & Hawkes, and was also taken up by Vaughan Williams in his *Folksongs for Schools*.⁶

⁵ Powell, Neil (2013). *Britten: A Life for Music*. London: Hutchinson.

⁶ Good Morning Britten. "Listening to Britten – I will give my love an apple".

<https://goodmorningbritten.wordpress.com/2013/11/24/listening-to-britten-i-will-give-my-love-an-apple/>. Published on November 24, 2013.

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Text

I will give my love an apple without e'er a core,
I will give my love a house without e'er a door,
I will give my love a palace wherein she may be,
And she may unlock it without any key.

My head is the apple without e'er a core,
My mind is the house without e'er a door,
My heart is the palace wherein she may be,
And she may unlock it without any key.

White Noise

Lindsey Bartlett, Hyunjung Byun, and Jon Harrity

You sit on your couch and look out the window. You hear the wind chimes ringing from a slight breeze in the air. You look around and see the cars passing by on the street, the kids playing on the sidewalk, and the neighborhood cat sitting by a bush. You let out a calm sigh. The mail carrier comes up to steps and slides the mail through your door. You hum as you look through the mail and saunter back to the couch. Another beautiful day.

Three Heavens and Hells

Meredith Monk (b. 1942)

- I. There are three heavens and hells
- II. People, animal, things heaven and hell

Meredith Jane Monk is an American composer, performer, director, vocalist, filmmaker, choreographer, and LGBTQ+ icon in the contemporary classical music world. From the 1960s onwards, Monk has created multi-disciplinary works which combine music, theatre, and dance, recording extensively for ECM Records.⁷ The text for this piece is taken from *Electric Chocolate* written by Tennessee Reed (whose father is the author Ishmael Reed). Meredith Monk chose the text “Three Heavens and Hells”—written when Tennessee was eleven years old—because it gave her “space to work with [her] own rhythms and phonemes as well as an intriguing set of images to play with.”⁸ The first two movements of the piece feature portions of that text.

Text

There are three heavens and hells

People	Animal	Things
heaven and	heaven and	heaven and
hell	hell	hell

What do the three heavens and hells look like?

They are all the same.

⁷ "Meredith Monk". <https://www.meredithmonk.org/>. Accessed on November 15, 2020.

⁸ Young People's Chorus. *Meredith Monk: Three Heavens and Hells*. <https://ypc.org/portfolio-item/meredith-monk/>. Accessed on November 15, 2020.

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Graphic Score Improvisation

Samuel Lovas (graphic score) and Tara Sandlin

In this improvisation, one of our singers Tara Sandlin will come face to face with an abstract piece of art whose colorful shapes and curves will serve as a “score” to inspire her performance.

Out of my Element

Sarah Goldman and Samuel Lovas

“Out of my Element” is a song with text by Sarah Goldman. The song shows the speaker’s journey from being lost in her ways and told she wasn’t good enough to gaining strength and proving that she is capable of becoming who she wants to be.

Text

Out of my element, I’m just tryin’ to do my best.
So much temperament.
I’m better than this, I have confessed.
But give me a chance, I won’t let you down.
I’m not giving it up, not this time around.
I used to think I had better luck, but now I’m not
so sure.

I’m comin’ back and I’m better than before.
Get ready, get ready to settle the score.
You better check yourself; your apologies are
stale.
Because this world is full of all of you who
thought that I would fail.
I’ll do it again in my element; I’m better than
before.

Toft Serenade

Augusta Read Thomas (b. 1964)

Augusta Read Thomas is an American composer and professor. “Toft Serenade” for viola and piano, composed in 2006, is a six- minute duo commissioned by Christopher and Douglas Toft for their parents, Richard and Marietta, in honor of their respective 70th and 65th birthdays. This serenade is organic and, at every level, concerned with transformations and connections.⁹

Echolocation

Lindsey Bartlett, Hyunjung Byun, Sam Lovas, and Paul Mokotoff

The 52-hertz whale (Whalien 52) is an individual whale of unidentified species, which calls at the very unusual frequency of 52 Hz. This pitch is a much higher frequency than that of the other whale species. It appears to be the only individual emitting a whale call at this frequency. It has been described as the “world’s loneliest whale.” It calls out every night, waiting for other whales to respond, but they never will...

As of Now

Hyunjung Byun, Samuel Lovas, Paul Mokotoff, and Victoria Quiñones

“As of Now” is an improvised poem by Victoria Quiñones. The piece evokes the conflicted sadness of someone who misses the one they love, knowing that they are not good for each other. The speaker wonders if the other person feels the same.

⁹ “Augusta Read Thomas”. <http://www.augustareadthomas.com/>. Accessed on November 15, 2020.

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Text

We travel very far, many miles in my car.
You seem to lie awake, while I'm pulling your weight.
But not today please stay away, for many days.
I'd stay awake just wishing, I'm the one you're missing.

Group Improvisation with Bus Sound Symphony, c. 2020

All Performers

Environmental Sounds Sourced by Tara Sandlin

Many Syracuse University students will at some point take the bus into the city that surrounds our campus for classes, jobs, medical appointments, religious observances, or any number of other reasons. The sounds of the bus jostling, wheezing, stopping, and starting are familiar enough that for many of us, they are simply a familiar, almost mundane thread running through our lives. Avid users of public transit will notice, however, that the recognizable announcements read on Centro buses now include a bit of additional text that likely would have baffled us before 2020: "Please wear a mask while aboard Centro buses." These found sounds represent what is ordinary, what is exceptional, and how practices and mores from one of those categories may have switched categories in the past year. The members of our ensemble and many musicians like us have had to change how we practice our craft, and today's improvisation is a somber yet hopeful expression of how we have continued and to create and find the music around us despite the circumstances.